

Lexington & West Cambridge Railroad:
Lexington Depot
Depot Square
Lexington
Middlesex County
Massachusetts

HAER No. MA-21

HAER
MASS,
9 - LEX,
16 -

PHOTOGRAPHS

HISTORICAL & DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Engineering Record
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D. C. 20240

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

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Location: Depot Square
Lexington, Middlesex County, Massachusetts

UTM: 19.316730.4701770
Quad: Lexington

Date of Construction: circa 1846; altered 1970s

Builder/Designer: Lexington & West Cambridge Railroad

Original Use: Railroad Depot

Current Use: Bank

Present Owner: Depositors Trust Company

Significance: The Lexington & West Cambridge Railroad, incorporated by the legislature in 1845, was built to link Lexington and Arlington (then called West Cambridge) with the new line of the Fitchburg Railroad in North Cambridge. The line was completed in 1846, and the first train to use the line, on August 24th, chanced also to be the first train to enter the Fitchburg's depot on Causeway Street in Boston. But as an independent line without right to haul its own traffic on the main line, it could attract little freight, and the company soon petitioned the Fitchburg to purchase the road outright. This the Fitchburg declined to do. Instead, the Boston & Lowell Railroad, reaching after suburban traffic, discovered in the branch a possible feeder and bought control of the road, building a short strip of track from its line at Somerville Junction to Lake Street in Arlington. Renamed the Middlesex Central Branch, the line was extended to Concord in 1874. The Lexington station, probably built about 1846, is the only known survivor of a railroad station form that in the 1840s and 50s was very common, incorporating beneath the station roof, track space for the engine and

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cars. Although damaged by fire in 1918, the station retains the original elliptical trainshed opening. Along the outer rail, the roof is supported by a row of eleven boxed columns. In the early 1920s, the Boston architectural firm of Kilham, Hopkins & Greeley gave the building its present Colonial Revival details including cupola, roof balustrade, and colonnade along the front of the station. The interior has recently been renovated for use as a bank.

References:

Wellington, George Y., "Origins of the Lexington & West Cambridge Branch Railroad," Lexington Historical Society Proceedings 3 (1900-04), pp. 58-61; Parker, Charles S., Town of Arlington, Past & Present (Arlington: C. S. Parker & Son, 1907) pp. 78-80; Kelley, Beverly Alison, Lexington, A Century of Photographs (Lexington: Lexington Historical Society, 1981), pp. 106-107; The American Architect 20 December 1925, p. 549.

Transmitted by:

Jean P. Yearby, 1984, from data compiled by Peter Stott